

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method for managing a geographical distribution of business
2 representatives, the method comprising:
3 receiving a trace defining a closed geographical area;
4 identifying at least one geographical unit within the closed geographical area;
5 and
6 modifying a stored characteristic of the geographical unit in response to an
7 instruction from a user.

1 2. The method recited in claim 1 wherein modifying the stored
2 characteristic of the at least one geographical unit comprises assigning a business
3 representative to the at least one geographical unit.

1 3. The method recited in claim 2 wherein assigning a business
2 representative to the at least one geographical unit comprises substituting the business
3 representative for a prior business representative.

1 4. The method recited in claim 1 wherein receiving a trace defining a
2 closed geographical area comprises receiving a freehand trace.

1 5. The method recited in claim 4 wherein the freehand trace is provided
2 with a pen and digitizing tablet.

1 6. The method recited in claim 4 wherein the freehand trace is provided
2 with a touch screen.

1 7. The method recited in claim 1 wherein the at least one geographical
2 unit is comprised by a hierarchy of geographical units.

1 8. The method recited in claim 1 wherein the at least one geographical
2 unit is comprised by an established set of geographical units.

1 9. The method recited in claim 8 wherein modifying the stored
2 characteristic of the at least one geographical unit comprises removing the at least one
3 geographical unit from the established set of geographical units.

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1 10. The method recited in claim 8 further comprising updating an
2 assignment of business representatives to geographical units in accordance with a change in
3 the established set of geographical units.

1 11. The method recited in claim 1 wherein modifying the stored
2 characteristic of the at least one geographical unit comprises adding the at least one
3 geographical unit to an established set of geographical units.

1 12. The method recited in claim 1 further comprising displaying an
2 assignment of a plurality of business representatives to a plurality of geographical units
3 graphically.

1 13. A computer-readable storage medium having a computer-readable
2 program embodied therein for directing operation of a computer system including an input
3 device, a display device, a processor, and a storage device, wherein the computer-readable
4 program includes instructions for operating the computer system to manage a geographical
5 distribution of business representatives in accordance with the following:
6 receiving a trace from the input device defining a closed geographical area;
7 identifying at least one geographical unit within the closed geographical area
8 with the processor; and
9 modifying a stored characteristic of the at least one geographical unit on the
10 storage device in response to an instruction from a user.

1 14. The computer-readable storage medium recited in claim 13 wherein
2 modifying the stored characteristic of the at least one geographical unit comprises assigning a
3 business representative to the at least one geographical unit.

1 15. The computer-readable storage medium recited in claim 13 wherein
2 the at least one geographical unit is comprised by a hierarchy of geographical units.

1 16. The computer-readable storage medium recited in claim 13 wherein
2 the at least one geographical unit is comprised by an established set of geographical units.

1 17. The computer-readable storage medium recited in claim 16 wherein
2 the computer-readable program further includes instructions for updating an assignment of

3 business representatives to geographical units in accordance with a change in the established
4 set of geographical units.

1 18. The computer-readable storage medium recited in claim 13 wherein
2 the computer-readable program further includes instructions for displaying an assignment of
3 a plurality of business representatives to a plurality of geographical units graphically on the
4 display device.

1 19. A computer system comprising:
2 an input device;
3 a storage device;
4 a processor in communication with the input device and the storage device;

5 and

6 a memory coupled with the processor, the memory comprising a computer-
7 readable storage medium having a computer-readable program embodied therein for
8 operating the computer system to manage a geographical distribution of business
9 representatives, the computer-readable program including:

10 instructions for receiving a trace from the input device defining a
11 closed geographical area;

12 instructions for identifying at least one geographical unit within the
13 closed geographical area with the processor; and

14 instructions for modifying a stored characteristic of the at least one
15 geographical unit on the storage device in response to an instruction from a user.

1 20. The computer system recited in claim 19 wherein the instructions for
2 modifying the stored characteristic of the at least one geographical unit comprise instructions
3 for assigning a business representative to the at least one geographical unit.

1 21. The computer system recited in claim 19 wherein the at least one
2 geographical unit is comprised by a hierarchy of geographical units.

1 22. The computer system recited in claim 19 wherein the at least one
2 geographical unit is comprised by an established set of geographical units.

1 23. The computer system recited in claim 22 wherein the computer-
2 readable program further includes instructions for updating an assignment of business

3 representatives to geographical units in accordance with a change in the established set of
4 geographical units.

1 24. The computer system recited in claim 19 further comprising a display
2 device in communication with the processor, wherein the computer-readable program further
3 includes instructions for displaying an assignment of a plurality of business representatives to
4 a plurality of geographical units graphically on the display device.